

basic themes





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Wisdom Audio Visual Exchange

Printed: 3000 copies Apr 2005

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basic themes

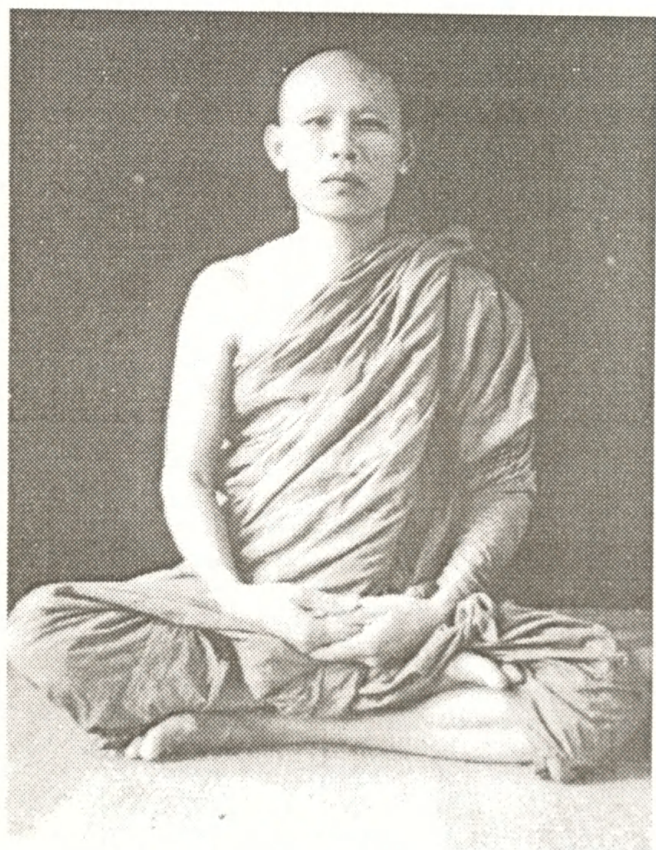
*A Handbook
for Meditators*

by

Phra Ajaan Lee
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*Translated from the Thai by
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for free distribution



Phra Ajaan Lee
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Prologue

Beginning meditators should search for two things as external aids to their practice—

1. Suitable companions (*puggala-sappāya*): Be judicious in choosing people to associate with. Search only for companions who have peace of mind. This can be any group at all, as long as the group as a whole is aiming for mental peace.

2. A suitable location (*senāsana-sappāya*): Choose a quiet place with an agreeable atmosphere, far from human society. Places of this sort, providing physical seclusion, are conducive to the practice of meditation. Examples listed in the Canon include caverns and caves, the shade of an overhanging cliff-face, the forest wilderness, and empty houses or buildings where not too many people will come passing by. Places like this are an excellent aid and support for a beginning meditator.

When you go to stay in such a place, don't let your thoughts dwell on topics that will act as enemies to your peace of mind. For example, don't preoccupy yourself with magic spells or the black arts. Instead, call to mind and put into practice principles and qualities that will be to your benefit. For example—

Appicchatā: Be a person of few wants with regard to the necessities of life.

Santuṭṭhi: Be content with the possessions you already have.

Viveka: Aim solely for peace, quiet, and seclusion.

Asaṇsagga: Don't entangle yourself with human companionship.

Viriyārambha: Be single-minded and persistent in making the mind still and at peace.

Silānussati: Reflect on your own conduct to see if you've overstepped any of your precepts, and—if you have—immediately purify your behavior through your own intention.

Samādhi-kathā: Focus on calling to mind the meditation theme on which your mind can become firmly established.

Paññā-kathā: Focus exclusively on those topics that will give rise to discernment and clear insight.

Vimutti: Make the mind well-disposed toward the search for release from all defilements.

Vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana: Focus on contemplating how to come to the realizations that will enable you to gain release from the fermentation of all defilements.

These principles are guidelines for meditators of every sort, and will direct the mind solely to the path leading beyond all suffering and stress.

What follows is a short-hand list of essential principles, selected to help prevent meditators from getting tied up in the course of their practice. These principles, though, should be viewed merely as incidental to the Dhamma. The reality of the Dhamma has to be brought into being within ourselves through our own energies: This is called practicing the Dhamma. If we go no further than the lists, we'll end up with only concepts of the Dhamma. Our ultimate aim should be to make the mind still until we reach the natural reality that exists on its own within us, that knows on its own and lets go on its own. This is the practice of the Dhamma that will lead us to the realization of the Dhamma—the true taste and nourishment of the Dhamma—so that we will no longer be caught up on the ropes.

In other words, conceptualized Dhamma is like a rope bridge for crossing over a river. If we take the bridge down and carry it with us, it will serve no purpose other than to weigh us down and get us all tied up. So no matter how much conceptualized Dhamma you may have memorized, when you come to the point where you're practicing for real you have to take responsibility for yourself. Whether you are to win or lose, let go or cling, will depend on how much Dhamma you've built into your own mind. This is why we're taught not to cling to the scriptures and texts, to meanings and concepts. Only when we train ourselves to get beyond all this will we be heading for purity.

Attāhi attano nātho:

Nothing can help us unless we can rely on ourselves. Only when we realize this will we be on the right track. The Buddha attained all of the truths he taught before he put them into words. It wasn't the case that he came up with the words first and then put them into practice later. He was like the scientists who experiment and get results before writing textbooks. But people who simply read the textbooks know everything—for example, they may know every part in an airplane—but they can't produce one out of their own knowledge. To be a consumer and to be a producer are two different things. If we cling merely to the concepts of the Dhamma, simply memorizing them, we're no more than consumers. Only if we make ourselves into producers, so that others can consume, will we be acting properly.

To be successful producers, we have to accept responsibility for ourselves. If there's any area where we don't succeed, we should use our own ingenuity until we do. If we rely only on the ingenuity of others, then we can't depend on ourselves. And if we can't depend on ourselves, why should we let other people think that they can depend on us?

This is why I have compiled this list of principles merely as a brief beginning guide for meditators.

The Thirteen Ascetic Observances

1. *Paṇsukūlikaṇḍa*: the practice of wearing robes made from thrown-away cloth.

2. *Tecivarikaṅga*: the practice of using only one set of three robes.
3. *Piṇḍapātikaṅga*: the practice of going for alms.
4. *Sapadācārikaṅga*: the practice of not by-passing any donors on one's alms path.
5. *Ekāsanikaṅga*: the practice of eating no more than one meal a day.
6. *Pattapiṇḍikaṅga*: the practice of eating one's food only from one's bowl.
7. *Khalupacchābhattikaṅga*: the practice of not accepting any food presented after one has eaten one's fill.
8. *Āraṇṇikaṅga*: the practice of living in the wilderness.
9. *Rukkhamūlikaṅga*: the practice of living under the shade of a tree.
10. *Abbhokāsikaṅga*: the practice of living out under the open sky.
11. *Sosānikaṅga*: the practice of living in a cemetery.
12. *Yathāsanthatikaṅga*: the practice of living in whatever place is assigned to one.
13. *Nesajjikaṅga*: the practice of not lying down.

The Fourteen Duties

1. *Ākantuka-vatta*: duties of a monk newly arriving at a monastery.
2. *Āvāsika-vatta*: duties of a host-monk when a newcomer arrives.

3. *Gamika-vatta*: duties of a monk when leaving a monastery.
4. *Anumodanā-vatta*: duties connected with expressing appreciation for donations of food.
5. *Bhattaka-vatta*: duties to observe before and after one's meal.
6. *Piṇḍicārika-vatta*: duties to observe when going for alms.
7. *Āraññika-vatta*: duties to observe when living in the wilderness.
8. *Senāsana-vatta*: duties to observe in looking after one's dwelling place.
9. *Jantaghara-vatta*: duties to observe in using the fire-house.
10. *Vaccakuṭi-vatta*: duties to observe in using the toilet.
11. *Upajjhāya-vatta*: duties to observe in attending to one's preceptor.
12. *Ācariya-vatta*: duties to observe in attending to one's teacher.
13. *Saddhivihārika-vatta*: a preceptor's duties toward his pupil.
14. *Antevāsika-vatta*: a teacher's duties toward his pupil.

Seven Important Sets of Principles (The Wings to Awakening)

1. The four frames of reference (*satipaṭṭhāna*): body, feelings, mind, mental qualities in and of themselves.

2. The four right exertions (*sammappadhāna*): making the effort to prevent evil from arising, to abandon whatever evil has arisen, to give rise to the good that hasn't yet arisen, and to maintain the good that has.

3. The four bases of power (*iddhipāda*):

Chanda—an affinity for one's meditation theme.

Viriya—persistence.

Citta—intentness on one's goal.

Vimaṅsā—circumspection in one's activities .

4. The five faculties (*indriya*): conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment (factors that are pre-eminent in performing one's duties).

5. The five strengths (*bala*): conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment (factors that give energy to the observance of one's duties).

6. The seven factors for Awakening (*bojjhaṅga*):

Sati-sambojjhaṅga—mindfulness and recollection.

Dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga—discrimination in choosing a meditation theme well-suited to oneself.

Viriya-sambojjhaṅga—persistence.

Pīti-sambojjhaṅga—rapture; refreshment; fullness of body and mind.

Passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga—physical stillness and mental serenity.

Samādhi-sambojjhaṅga—concentration.

Upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga—equanimity.

7. The eightfold path (*magga*):

Sammā-diṭṭhi—Right View.

Sammā-saṅkappa—Right Resolve.

Sammā-vācā—Right Speech.

Sammā-kammanta—Right Action.

Sammā-ājīva—Right Livelihood.

Sammā-vāyāma—Right Effort.

Sammā-sati—Right Mindfulness.

Sammā-samādhi—Right Concentration.

The Forty Meditation Themes

Ten recollections; ten foul objects; ten *kaṣiṇas*; four sublime abidings; four formless absorptions; one resolution into elements; and one perception of the filthiness of food.

Ten recollections:

1. *Buddhānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Buddha.
2. *Dhammānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Dhamma.
3. *Śaṅghānussati*: recollection of the virtues of the Śaṅgha.
4. *Silānussati*: recollection of one's own moral virtue.
5. *Cāgānussati*: recollection of one's own generosity.
6. *Devatānussati*: recollection of the qualities that lead to rebirth as a heavenly being.
7. *Kāyaḡatāsati*: mindfulness immersed in the body.
8. *Maraṇassati*: mindfulness of death.

9. *Ānāpānassati*: mindfulness of breathing.
10. *Upasamānussati*: recollection of the virtues of nibbāna—ultimate pleasure; unexcelled ease, free from birth, aging, illness and death.

Ten foul objects:

1. *Uddhumātaka*: a rotten, bloated corpse, its body all swollen and its features distended out of shape.
2. *Vinilaka*: a livid corpse, with patchy discoloration—greenish, reddish, yellowish—from the decomposition of the blood.
3. *Vipubbaka*: a festering corpse, oozing lymph and pus from its various orifices.
4. *Vichiddaka*: a corpse falling apart, the pieces scattered about, radiating their stench.
5. *Vikkhāyittaka*: a corpse that various animals, such as dogs, are gnawing, or that vultures are picking at, or that crows are fighting over, pulling it apart in different directions.
6. *Vikkhittaka*: corpses scattered about, i.e., unclaimed bodies that have been thrown together in a pile—face up, face down, old bones and new scattered all over the place.
7. *Hatavikkhittaka*: the corpse of a person violently murdered, slashed and stabbed with various weapons, covered with wounds—short, long, shallow, deep—some parts hacked so that they're almost detached.

8. *Lohitaka*: a corpse covered with blood, like the hands of a butcher, all red and raw-smelling.
9. *Puḷuvaka*: a corpse infested with worms: long worms, short worms, black, green, and yellow worms, squeezed into the ears, eyes, and mouth; squirming and squiggling about, filling the various parts of the body like a net full of fish that has fallen open.
10. *Aṭṭhika*: a skeleton, some of the joints already separated, others not yet, the bones—whitish, yellowish, discolored—scattered near and far all over the place.

Ten *kasinas*:

1. *Paṭhavi kasiṇa*: staring at earth.
2. *Āpo kasiṇa*: staring at water.
3. *Tejo kasiṇa*: staring at fire.
4. *Vāyo kasiṇa*: staring at wind.
5. *Odāta kasiṇa*: staring at white.
6. *Pita kasiṇa*: staring at yellow.
7. *Lohita kasiṇa*: staring at red.
8. *Nīla kasiṇa*: staring at blue (or green).
9. *Ākāsa kasiṇa*: staring at the space in a hole or an opening.
10. *Āloka kasiṇa*: staring at bright light.

Four sublime abidings:

1. *Mettā*: benevolence, friendliness, good will, love in the true sense.

2. *Karuṇa*: compassion, sympathy, pity, aspiring to find a way to be truly helpful.
3. *Muditā*: appreciation for the goodness of other people and for our own when we are able to help them.
4. *Upekkhā*: When our efforts to be of help don't succeed, we should make the mind neutral—neither pleased nor upset by whatever it focuses on—so that it enters the emptiness of *jhāna*, centered and tranquil to the point where it can disregard acts of thinking and evaluating as well as feelings of rapture and ease, leaving only oneness and equanimity with regard to all objects.

Four formless absorptions:

1. *Ākāsānañcāyatana*: being absorbed in a sense of boundless emptiness and space as one's preoccupation.
2. *Viññāṇañcāyatana*: being absorbed in boundless consciousness as one's preoccupation, with no form or figure acting as the sign or focal point of one's concentration.
3. *Ākiñcaññāyatana*: focusing exclusively on a fainter or more subtle sense of consciousness that has no limit and in which nothing appears or disappears, to the point where one almost understands it to be *nibbāna*.
4. *Nevaśāññā-nasaññāyatana*: being absorbed in a feeling that occurs in the mind, that isn't awareness exactly, but neither is it non-awareness; i.e., there is awareness,

but with no thinking, no focusing of awareness on what it knows.

These four formless absorptions are merely resting places for the mind, because they are states that the mind enters, stays in, and leaves. They are by nature unstable and inconstant, so we shouldn't rest content simply at this level. We have to go back and forth through the various levels many times so as to realize that they're only stages of enforced tranquility.

One resolution into elements: i.e., regarding each part of the body simply in terms of physical properties or elements.

One perception of the filthiness of food: i.e., viewing food as something repugnant and unclean—with regard to where it comes from, how it's prepared, how it's mixed together when it's chewed, and where it stays in the stomach and intestines.

* * *

With one exception, all of the meditation themes mentioned here are simply *gocara dhamma*—foraging places for the mind. They're not places for the mind to stay. If we try to go live in the things we see when we're out foraging, we'll end up in trouble. Thus, there is one theme that's termed '*vihāra dhamma*' (a home for the mind) or '*anāgocara*' (a place of no wandering): Once you've developed it, you

can use it as a place to stay. When you practice meditation, you don't have to go foraging in other themes; you can stay in the single theme that's the apex of all meditation themes: *ānāpānassati*, keeping the breath in mind. This theme, unlike the others, has none of the features or various deceptions that can upset or disturb the heart. As for the others:

—Some of the recollections, when you've practiced them for a long time, can give rise to startling or unsettling visions.

—The ten foul objects can give rise after a while to visions and sometimes to sense of alienation and discontent that turns into restlessness and distress, your mind being unable to fabricate anything on which it can come to rest, to the point where you can't eat or drink.

—The ten kasiṇas, after you've stared at them a long while, can give rise to visions that tend to pull you out of your sense of the body, as you become enthralled by their color and features, to the point where you may become completely carried away.

—As for the resolution into elements, when you become more and more engrossed in contemplating the elements, everything in the world becomes nothing more than elements, which are everywhere the same. You come to believe that you no longer have to make distinctions: You're nothing more than elements, members of the opposite sex are nothing more than elements, food is nothing more than elements, and so you can end up overstepping the bounds of morality and the monastic discipline.

—As for the perception of the filthiness of food, as you become more and more caught up in it, everything becomes repulsive. You can't eat or sleep, your mind becomes restless and disturbed, and you inflict suffering on yourself.

—As for the four sublime abidings, if you don't have *jhāna* as a dwelling for the mind, feelings of good will, compassion, and appreciation can all cause you to suffer. Only if you have *jhāna* can these qualities truly become sublime abidings, that is, restful homes for the heart to stay (*vihāra dhamma*).

Thus only one of these themes—*ānāpānassati*, keeping the breath in mind—is truly safe. This is the supreme meditation theme. You don't have to send your awareness out to fix it on any outside objects at all. Even if you may go foraging through such objects, don't go living in them, because after a while they can waver and shift, just as when we cross the sea in a boat: When we first get into the boat we may feel all right, but as soon as the boat heads out into the open bay and we're buffeted by wind and waves, we can start feeling seasick. To practice keeping the breath in mind, though, is like sitting in an open shelter at dockside: We won't feel queasy or sick; we can see boats as they pass by on the water, and people as they pass by on land. Thus, keeping the breath in mind is classed:

—as an exercise agreeable to people of any and every temperament;

—as '*anāgocara*,' an exercise in which you focus exclusively on the breath while you sit in meditation, without having to compound things by sending your awareness out to grab this or get hold of that;

—and as '*dhamma-ṭhiti*,' i.e., all you have to do is keep your mind established firm and in place.

The beginning stage is to think *buddho*—'*bud-*' with the in-breath, and '*dho*' with the out. Fixing your attention on just this much is enough to start seeing results. There's only one aim, and that's:

that you really do it.

If there is anything you're unsure of, or if you encounter any problems, then consult the following pages.



Introduction

This handbook on keeping the breath in mind has had a number of readers who have put it into practice and seen results appearing within themselves in accordance with the strength of their practice. Many people have come to me to discuss the results they've gained from practicing the principles in this book, but now it's out of print. For this reason I've decided to enlarge it and have it printed again as an aid for those who are interested in the practice.

Now, if you're not acquainted with this topic, have never attempted it, or aren't yet skilled—if you don't know the techniques of the practice—it's bound to be hard to understand, because the currents of the mind, when they're written down as a book, simply won't be a book. The issues involved in dealing with the mind are more than many. If your knowledge of them isn't truly comprehensive, you may misunderstand what you come to see and know, and this in turn can be destructive in many ways. (1) You may lose whatever respect you had for the practice, deciding that there's no truth to it. (2) You may gain only a partial grasp of things, leading you to decide that other people can't practice or are practicing wrongly, and in the end you're left with no way to practice yourself. So you decide to 'let go' simply

through conjecture and speculation. But the truth is that this simply won't work. True and complete letting go can come only from the principles well-taught by the Buddha: virtue, concentration, and discernment, which are a synopsis of the eightfold path he taught in his first sermon.

So in our practice we should consider how virtue, concentration, discernment, and release can be brought into being. Virtue forms the basis for concentration; concentration, the basis for discernment (liberating insight or cognitive skill); and discernment, the basis for release from ignorance, craving, and attachment. Thus in this book, which is a guide to developing Right Concentration, I would like to recommend to other meditators a method that, in my experience, has proven safe and productive, so that they can test it for themselves by putting it into practice until they start seeing results.

The main concern of this book is with the way to mental peace. Now, the word 'peace' has many levels. A mind infused with virtue has one level of peace and happiness. A mind stilled through concentration has another level of peace and happiness. A mind at peace through the power of discernment has still another level of happiness. And the peace of a mind released is yet another level, with a happiness completely apart from the rest.

In these matters, though, meditators tend to prefer the results to the causes. They aren't as interested in abandoning their own defilements through the principles of the practice as they are in standing out among society at large. They

appropriate the ideas and observations of other people as being their own, but by and large their wisdom is composed of *bahira paññā*—remembered ‘outsights’, not true insight.

So when you want the reality of the principles taught by the Buddha, you should first lift your mind to this principle—Right Concentration—because it’s an excellent gathering of the energies of your mind. All energy in the world comes from stopping and resting. Motion is something that destroys itself—as when our thinking goes all out of bounds. Take walking for instance: When we walk, energy comes from the foot at rest. Or when we speak, energy comes from stopping between phrases. If we were to talk without stopping, without resting between phrases, not only would it waste energy, but the language we’d speak wouldn’t even be human. So it is with practicing the Dhamma: Release comes from concentration and discernment acting together. Release through the power of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*) requires more concentration and less discernment; release through discernment (*paññā-vimutti*), more discernment and less concentration—but there is no way that release can be attained without the stillness of concentration.

Thus, resting the mind provides the strength needed to support all the qualities developed in the practice, which is why it’s such an essential part of Right Concentration. It forms a wellspring and a storage place for all knowledge, whether of the world or of the Dhamma. If you aren’t acquainted with this basic principle, skilled awareness won’t arise. And if you don’t have skilled awareness, how will you be able to let

go? You'll have to go groping around in unskilled awareness. As long as the mind is in the grips of unskilled awareness, it's bound to be deluded by its fabrications.

Unskilled awareness is a brine in which the mind lies soaking; a mind soaked in its juices is like wet, sappy wood that, when burned, gives off smoke as its signal, but no flame. As the smoke rises into the air, you imagine it to be something high and exalted. It's high, all right, but only like smoke or overcast clouds. If there's a lot of it, it can obscure your vision and that of others, so that you can't see the light of the sun and moon. This is why such people are said to be 'groping.' Those who train their own hearts, though, will give rise to skilled awareness. When skilled awareness penetrates the heart, you'll come to realize the harmful potency of mental fabrications. The arising of skilled awareness in the heart is like the burning of dry, sapless wood that gives off flame and light. Even though there may be some smoke, you don't pay it any mind, because the firelight is more outstanding.

The flame of skilled awareness gives rise to five sorts of results:

1. Rust (the defilements) won't take hold of the heart.
2. The heart becomes purified.
3. The heart becomes radiant in and of itself (*pabhassaram cittam*).
4. The heart develops majesty (*tejas*).

5. The three skills, the eight skills, and the four forms of acumen will arise.

All of these things arise through the power of the mind. The nature of the mind is that it already has a certain amount of instinctive intuition—the times when it knows on its own, as when you happen to think of a particular person, and then he or she actually shows up. All good qualities, from the mundane to the transcendent, are always present in each of us. These qualities—the Dhamma—aren't the exclusive possession of any particular group or person. We all have the right to develop them and put them into practice.

For these qualities to yield results, we have to develop them in conjunction with the following four principles—

1. *Chanda*: feeling an affinity for the practice.
2. *Viriya*: being persistent in the practice.
3. *Citta*: being intent on the practice.
4. *Vimaṇsā*: being circumspect in what we do, i.e., circumspect before we do it, circumspect (mindful and alert) while we're doing it, and circumspect with regard to the results that arise from what we've done.

These four principles form the foundation for success in all areas, whether in matters of the world or of the Dhamma. Once they're actualized within us and focused together on a single goal, we're bound to succeed in line with our aspirations. The results they yield, in short, are of two sorts—

1. *Iddhiriddhi*: certain mundane powers that accrue to meditators.

2. *Puññariddhi*: power in terms of the Dhamma that will accrue to meditators, providing means for settling issues that relate to the world and the heart, or for liberating the mind from all mundane influences. This is termed:

vimutti—release,
visuddhi—purity,
santi—peace,
nibbāna—the disbanding of all stress.

Thus, I would like to invite all Buddhists—all who hope for peace and well-being—to reflect on the principles of practice dealing with Right Concentration presented here as a guide for those who are interested. If you have any questions dealing with this book, or any problems arising from the practice of training the mind, I will be glad to give whatever advice I can.

May you prosper and be well.

Whoever feels that this book is of use and would like to print it again for free distribution, may go ahead and do so without having to ask permission. Some parts may not be correct in terms of the Pali, so wherever there may be any mistakes, I ask your forgiveness.

Phra Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo

Wat Asokaram, Samut Prakaan
 September, 1960

'Buddhānussati mettā ca asubhaṃ maraṇassati:

Iccimā caturārakkhā....'

(Recollection of the Buddha; good will;
the foul; mindfulness of death;
these four guardian protectors....)

—Rama IV, 'Mokkhupāya Gāthā'

I. Recollection of the Buddha

Arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho bhagavā:

Buddhaṃ bhagavantam abhivādemi.

The Blessed One is Worthy and Rightly Self-awakened.
I bow down before the Awakened, Blessed One.

(BOW DOWN)

Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo:

Dhammam namassāmi.

The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One.
I pay homage to the Dhamma.

(BOW DOWN)

Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho:

Saṅgham namāmi.

The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples has practiced well.

I pay respect to the Saṅgha.

(BOW DOWN)

A. Paying homage to objects worthy of respect:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.

(REPEAT THREE TIMES.)

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened One.

Ukāsa, dvāra-tayena kataṃ,

sabbaṃ aparādhaṃ khamatha me bhante.

Asking your leave, I request that you forgive me for whatever wrong I have done with the three doors (of body, speech, and mind).

*Vandāmi bhante cetiyaṃ sabbaṃ sabbattha ṭhāne,
supatiṭṭhitaṃ sāriraṅka-dhātum, mahā-bodhiṃ buddha-rūpaṃ
sakkāratthaṃ.*

I revere every stūpa established in every place, every relic of the Buddha's body, every Great Bodhi tree, every Buddha image that is an object of veneration.

*Ahaṃ vandāmi dhātuyo. Ahaṃ vandāmi sabbaso. Iccetaṃ
ratanattayaṃ, ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā.*

I revere the relics. I revere them everywhere. I always revere the Triple Gem.

B. Paying homage to the Triple Gem:

Buddha-pūjā mahātejavanto: I ask to pay homage to the Buddha, whose majesty is greater than the powers of all beings human and divine. Thus, this homage to the Buddha is a means of developing great majesty.

Buddham jivitaṃ yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi: I take refuge in the Buddha from now until attaining nibbāna.

Dhamma-pūjā mahappañño: I ask to pay homage to the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, which are a well-spring of discernment for beings human and divine. Thus, this worship of the Dhamma is a means of developing great discernment.

Dhammaṃ jivitaṃ yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi: I take refuge in the Dhamma from now until attaining nibbāna.

Saṅgha-pūjā mahābhogāvaho: I ask to pay homage to those followers of the Buddha who have practiced well in thought, word, and deed; and who possess all wealth, beginning with Noble Wealth. Thus, this homage to the Saṅgha is a means of developing great wealth.

Saṅghaṃ jivitaṃ yāva-nibbānaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi: I take refuge in the Saṅgha from now until attaining nibbāna.

N'atthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ, Buddhō dhammo saṅgho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ: Etena sacca-vajjena hotu me jaya-maṅgalaṃ.

I have no other refuge: The Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are my highest refuge. By means of this vow, may the blessing of victory be mine.

*Yaṅkiñci ratanaṃ loke vijjati vividhaṃ puthu,
Ratanaṃ buddha-dhamma-saṅgha-samaṃ n'atthi,
Tasmā sotthi bhavantu me.*

Of the many and varied treasures found in the world, none equal the Triple Gem. Therefore, may well-being be mine.

(IF YOU REPEAT THE TRANSLATIONS OF THESE PASSAGES,
BOW DOWN ONCE AT THIS POINT.)



II. Good Will

Declare your purity, taking the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as witness once more, repeating this Pali passage:

Parisuddho ahaṃ bhante. Parisuddhoti maṃ buddho dhammo saṅgho dhāretu. (I now declare my purity to the Triple Gem. May the Triple Gem recognize me as pure at present.)

Now develop thoughts of good will, saying:

Sabbe sattā—May all living beings

Averā hontu—be free from animosity,

Abyāpajjhā hontu—free from oppression,

Aniḥā hontu—free from trouble.

Sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu—May they look after themselves with ease.

Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukha-jivino: May all beings always live happily, free from animosity.

Kataṃ puñña-phalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgi bhavantu te: May all share in the blessings springing from the good I have done.

(THIS IS THE ABBREVIATED VERSION. IF YOUR TIME IS LIMITED, SIMPLY SAY THIS MUCH AND THEN GET INTO POSITION TO MEDITATE.)

Spreading thoughts of good will to the six directions:

1. The eastern quarter: *'Puratthimasmim disā-bhāge sabbe sattā (May all living beings in the eastern quarter...) averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu. Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukhajivino. Katam puññaphalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgi bhavantu te.*

(FOR TRANSLATIONS, SEE ABOVE.)

2. The western quarter: *'Pacchimasmim disā-bhāge....'*

3. The northern quarter: *'Uttarasmim disā-bhāge....'*

4. The southern quarter: *'Dakkhiṇasmim disā-bhāge....'*

5. The lower regions: *'Hetthimasmim disā-bhāge....'*

6. The upper regions: *'Uparimasmim disā-bhāge sabbe sattā averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu. Sabbe sattā sadā hontu averā sukhajivino. Katam puññaphalaṃ mayhaṃ sabbe bhāgi bhavantu te.*

(BOW DOWN THREE TIMES.)

When you have finished spreading thoughts of good will to all six directions, cleanse your heart of thoughts of animosity and apprehension. Make your heart completely clear and at ease. Good will acts as a support for purity of virtue and so is an appropriate way of preparing the heart for the practice of tranquility and insight meditation.

III. The Foul: Tranquility Meditation

In other words, remove all befouling mental states from the mind. The things that befoul and darken the mind are the five Hindrances:

—*Kāma-chanda*: sensual desires, taking pleasure in sensual objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, ideas) and sensual moods (such as passion, aversion, and delusion).

—*Byāpāda*: ill will, malevolence, hatred.

—*Thina-middha*: torpor, lethargy, drowsiness, listlessness.

—*Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and anxiety.

—*Vicikicchā*: doubt, uncertainty.

When any of these unskillful states occupy the heart, it's not flourishing, blooming, or bright. For the heart to bloom, it has to be free from all five of the Hindrances; and for it to be free in this way, we have to develop concentration or absorption (*jhāna*), which is composed of directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation (see below). The heart will then be clear, bright, and resplendent. In Pali, this is called '*sobhaṇa-citta*.' Thus, in this section we will discuss how to develop concentration as a means of eliminating the Hindrances as follows:

A. 'Among the forty themes, breath is supreme.

Sit in a half-lotus position, your right leg on top of your left; your hands palm-up in your lap, your right hand on top of your left. Keep your body comfortably erect and your mind on what you're doing. Don't let your thoughts go spinning forward or back. Be intent on keeping track of the present: the present of the body, or the in-and-out breath; and the present of the mind, or mindfulness and all-round alertness. The present of the body and the present of the mind should be brought together at a single point. In other words, make the object of the mind single and one. Focus your attention on the breath, keeping watch over it until you're clearly aware that, 'This is the in-breath,' and 'This is the out.' Once you can see clearly in this way, call to mind the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, gathering them into a single word, 'Buddho.' Then divide 'Buddho' into two syllables, thinking 'bud-' with the in-breath, and 'dho' with the out, at the same time counting your breaths: 'Bud-' in, 'dho' out, one; 'bud-' in, 'dho' out, two; 'bud-' in 'dho' out, three, and so on up to ten. Then start counting again from one to nine; then one to eight, one to seven...six...five...four...three...two...one...zero. In other words:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 2 3 4 5 6

1 2 3 4

1 2 3

1 2

1

0

Keep three points—the breath, your mindfulness, and your awareness—together in a single stream. If when you've finished counting you find that your mind still won't stay with the breath, start by counting again, from one to ten and so on to zero. Keep this up until you feel that your mind has settled down, and then stay with zero. In other words, you no longer have to count, you no longer have to think '*Buddho*.' Simply keep careful watch over your breath and your awareness. Keep your awareness focused on a single point, mindful and watchful. Don't send it in and out after the breath. When the breath comes in, you know. When it goes out, you know, but don't make your awareness go in or out. Keep it neutral and still. Keep watch only on the present. When you can do this, the five Hindrances won't be able to find entry into the mind. This is called '*parikamma bhāvanā*,' repetition meditation.

At this point, the mind becomes light and can put aside its heavy burdens. When the mind is light, so is the body. In Pali this is called, '*kāya-lahutā, citta-lahutā*.' The mind is peaceful and solitary—free from agitation and unrest—clear and calm with the refined sense of the breath. When

the mind reaches this state, it's in the sphere of directed thought (*vitakka*), which is the first factor of *jhāna*.

Now survey and examine the characteristics of the breath. Try adjusting the breath in four different ways: Breathe in long and out long, and see whether your mind is at ease with that sort of breath. Then breathe in short and out short to see whether you feel comfortable and at ease that way. Then see whether you feel at ease breathing in long and out short, or in short and out long. Continue breathing in whichever of these four ways feels most comfortable and then let that comfortable breath spread throughout the different parts of the body. At the same time, expand your sense of mindful awareness along with the breath.

When the breath runs throughout the body, and the sensations of breath in the various parts of the body are coordinated, they can be put to use, for example, to relieve feelings of pain. Your sense of mindfulness at this point is broad; your alertness, fully developed. When mindfulness is spread throughout the body, this is called *kāyagatāsati*—mindfulness immersed in the body. Your frame of reference is large and expansive, and so is called '*mahāsati* *paṭṭhāna*.' Your alertness is present throughout, aware both of the causes—i.e., what you're doing—and of the results coming from what you've done. All of these characteristics are aspects of evaluation (*vicāra*), the second factor of *jhāna*.

Now that the body and mind have received nourishment—in other words, now that the breath has provided for the body and mindfulness has provided for the mind—

both body and mind are bound to reap results, i.e., rapture. The body is full and refreshed, free from restlessness. The mind is full and refreshed, free from anxiety and distraction, broad and blooming. This is called rapture (*pīti*), which is the third factor of *jhāna*.

Once fullness arises in this way, body and mind settle down and are still. In Pali this is termed '*kāya-passaddhi, citta-passaddhi*.' This feeling of stillness leads to a sense of relaxation and ease for both body and mind, termed pleasure (*sukha*).

These are the beginning steps in dealing with the mind. Once you are able to follow them, you should make a point of practicing them repeatedly, back and forth, until you're skilled at entering concentration, staying in place, and withdrawing. Even just this much can form a path along which the mind can then progress, for it has to some extent already reached the level of *upacāra bhāvanā*, threshold concentration.

B. Focal points for the mind

These include: (1) the tip of the nose; (2) the middle of the head; (3) the palate; (4) the base of the throat; (5) the tip of the breastbone; (6) the 'center,' two inches above the navel. In centering the breath at any of these points, people who tend to have headaches shouldn't focus on any point above the base of the throat.

Coordinate the various aspects of breath in the body, such as the up-flowing breath, the down-flowing breath, the breath flowing in the stomach, the breath flowing in the

intestines, the breath flowing along every part of the body, hot breath, cool breath, warm breath: Mesh these various sorts of breath so that they're balanced, even, and just right, so as to give rise to a sense of ease and comfort throughout the body. The purpose of examining and coordinating the breath is to expand your sense of mindfulness and awareness so that they are sensitive throughout the entire body. This will then benefit both body and mind. The enlarged sense of the body is termed *mahābhūta-rūpa*; expanded awareness is termed *mahaggatāṃ cittaṃ*. This sense of awareness will then go on to reap the benefits of its beauty that will arise in various ways, leading it to the level of *appanā bhāvanā*, fixed penetration.

The characteristics of the in-and-out breath, as they interact with the properties of the body, can cause the properties of water and earth to be affected as follows:

There are three types of blood in the human body—

1. Clear, white—arising from cool breathing.
2. Light red, dark red—arising from warm breathing.
3. Black, bluish black—arising from hot breathing.

These different types of blood, as they nourish the nerves in the body, can cause people to have different tendencies:

1. Hot breathing can make a person tend heavily toward being affectionate, easily attracted, and infatuated—tendencies that are associated with delusion.

2. Warm breathing can cause a person to have moderate tendencies as far as affection is concerned, but strong

tendencies toward a quick and violent temper—tendencies associated with anger.

3. Cool breathing causes weak tendencies toward affection but strong tendencies toward greed, craving material objects more than anything else.

If we know clearly which physical properties are aggravating greed, anger, or delusion, we can destroy the corresponding properties and these states of mind will weaken on their own.

‘Remove the fuel, and the fire won’t blaze.’

To adjust these properties skillfully gives rise to discernment, which lies at the essence of being skillful. Adjust the property of warmth so that the blood is clear and light red, and your discernment will be quick, your nerves healthy, your thinking perceptive, subtle, and deep. In other words, to make heavier use of the nerves in the physical heart is the way of the Dhamma. As for the nerves of the brain, to use them a great deal leads to restlessness, distraction, and heavy defilements.

These are just a few of the issues related to the breath. There are many, many more that people of discernment should discover on their own.

Nānā-dhātu-vijjā: knowledge of the subtleties of all 18 elements (*dhātu*), the 22 faculties (*indriya*), the six sense media (*āyatana*); acute insight into the qualities of the mind; expertise in concentration. Concentration gives rise to liberating insight, acquaintance with the process of fabrication;

nibbidā—disenchantment;
virāga—dispassion;
nirodha—utter disbanding;
vimutti—a mind released from the mundane;
santi—peace of heart;
paramam sukham—the ease that is ultimate bliss.

C. Images

These are of two sorts—

1. *Uggaha nimitta*: images as they are first perceived.
2. *Paṭibhāga nimitta*: adjusted images.

Images of either sort can appear at certain mental moments or with certain people. When the mind becomes still, *uggaha nimittas* can appear in either of two ways:

- from mental notes made in the past;
- on their own, without our ever having thought of the matter.

Uggaha nimittas of both sorts can be either beneficial or harmful, true or false, so we shouldn't place complete trust in them. If we're circumspect in our mindfulness and alertness, they can be beneficial. But if our powers of reference are weak or if we lack strength of mind, we're likely to follow the drift of whatever images appear, sometimes losing our bearings to the point where we latch onto the images as being real.

Uggaha nimittas are of two sorts—

a. Sensation-images: e.g., seeing images of our own body, of other people, of animals, or of corpses; images of black, red, blue or white. Sometimes these images are true, sometimes not. Sometimes images arise by way of the ear—for example, we may hear the voice of a person talking. Sometimes they arise by way of the nose—we may smell fragrant scents or foul, like those of a corpse. Sometimes images are sensed by the body—the body may feel small or large, tall or short. All of these sensations are classed as *uggaha nimittas*. If the mind is strong and resilient, they can act as a means for the arising of liberating insight. If our powers of reference are weak, though, they can turn into corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*), in which we fall for the objects we experience, believing them to be true. Even when they're true, things that are false can mingle in with them—like a man sitting under the open sky: When the sun shines, he's bound to have a shadow. The man really exists, and the shadow is connected with him, but the shadow isn't really the man. Thus, we're taught to let go of what's true and real; things that are untrue will then fall from our grasp as well.

b. Thought-images: When the breath is subtle and the mind is still and unoccupied, things can occur to it. Sometimes we may think of a question and then immediately know the answer. Sometimes we don't even have to think: The knowledge pops into the mind on its own. Things of this sort are also classed as *uggaha nimittas*. Sometimes they may be true, sometimes false, sometimes mixed. You can't

trust them to be absolutely true. Sometimes they're true, and that truth is what leads us to fall for them. For example, they may be true about three things and false about seven. Once we've placed our confidence in them, even the false things will appear true to us. This is one way of giving rise to the corruptions of insight.

So when sensation-images or thought-images arise in one way or another, you should then practice adjusting and analyzing them (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). In other words, when a visual image arises, if it's large, make it small, far, near, large, small, appear, and disappear. Analyze it into its various parts and then let it go. Don't let these images influence the mind. Instead, have the mind influence the images, as you will. If you aren't able to do this, then don't get involved with them. Disregard them and return to your original practice with the breath.

If a thought-image arises by way of the mind, stop, take your bearings, and consider exactly how much truth there is to the knowledge it gives. Even if it's true, you shouldn't latch onto what you know or see. If you latch onto your knowledge, it'll become a corruption of insight. If you latch onto your views, they'll become a form of attachment and conceit, in which you assume yourself to be this or that. Thus, you should let go of these things, in line with their true nature. If you aren't wise to them, they can skew your practice so that you miss out on the highest good.

D. The Ten Corruptions of Insight

1. *Obhāsa*: a bright light that enables you to see places both far and near.

2. *Ñāṇa*: knowledge enabling you to know in an uncanny way things you never before knew, such as *pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, the ability to remember previous lifetimes. Even knowledge of this sort, though, can mislead you. If you learn good things about your past, you may get pleased. If you learn bad or undesirable things about your past, you may get displeased. *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: Sometimes you may learn how people and other living beings die and are reborn—knowing, for instance, where they are reborn when they have died from this world—which can cause you to become engrossed in the various things you come to know and see. As you become more and more engrossed, false knowledge can step in, and yet you still assume it to be true.

3. *Pīti*: a sense of physical and mental fullness and satisfaction, full to the point of infatuation—physically satisfied to the point where you don't feel hunger or thirst, heat or cold; mentally satisfied to the point where you become engrossed and oblivious, lazy and lethargic, perhaps deciding that you've already achieved the goal. What's actually happened is that you've swallowed your mood down whole.

4. *Passaddhi*: The body is at peace and the mind serene, to the point where you don't want to encounter anything in the world. You see the world as being unpeaceful and you don't want to have anything to do with it. Actually, if the

mind is really at peace, everything in the world will also be at peace. People who are addicted to a sense of peace won't want to do any physical work or even think about anything, because they're stuck on that sense of peace as a constant preoccupation.

5. *Sukha*: Once there's peace, there's a sense of physical and mental pleasure and ease; and once there's a great deal of pleasure, you come to hate pain, seeing pleasure as something good and pain as something bad. Your view of things falls into two parts. Actually, pleasure doesn't come from anywhere else but pain. Pain is the same thing as pleasure: When pleasure arises, pain is its shadow; when pain arise, pleasure is its shadow. As long as you don't understand this, you give rise to a kind of defilement—again, you swallow your mood down whole. When a deep and arresting sense of relaxation, stillness, ease, or freedom from disturbance arises, you get engrossed in that feeling. What has happened is that you're simply stuck on a pleasing mental state.

6. *Adhimokkha*: being disposed to believing that your knowledge and the things you know are true. Once 'true' takes a stance, 'false' is bound to enter the picture. True and false go together, i.e., they're one and the same thing. For example, suppose we ask, 'Is Nai Daeng at home?' and someone answers, 'No, he isn't.' If Nai Daeng really exists and he's really at home, then when that person says, 'He's not at home,' he's lying. But if Nai Daeng doesn't exist, that person can't lie. Thus, true and false are one and the same....

7. *Paggāha*: excessive persistence, leading to restlessness. You're simply fastened on your preoccupation and too strongly focused on your goal....

8. *Upaṭṭhāna*: being obsessed with a particular item you've come to know or see, refusing to let it go.

9. *Upekkhā*: indifference, not wanting to meet with anything, be aware of anything, think about anything, or figure anything out; assuming that you've let go completely. Actually, this is a misunderstanding of that very mental moment.

10. *Nikanti*: being content with your various preoccupations, simply attached to the things you experience or see.

All of these things, if we aren't wise to them, can corrupt the heart. So, as meditators, we should attend to them and reflect on them until we understand them thoroughly. Only then will we be able to give rise to liberating insight, clear knowledge of the four truths:

1. Physical and mental stress, i.e., the things that burden the body or mind. Physical and mental pleasure and ease, though, are also classed as stress because they're subject to change.

2. The factors that enable these forms of stress to arise are three—

a. *Kāma-taṇhā*: craving for attractive and appealing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and ideas; fastening onto these things, grabbing hold of them as

belonging to the self. This is one factor that enables stress to arise. (The mind flashes out.)

b. Bhava-taṇhā: desire for things to be this way or that at times when they can't be the way we want them; wanting things to be a certain way outside of the proper time or occasion. This is called 'being hungry'—like a person who hungers for food but has no food to eat and so acts in a way that shows, 'I'm a person who wants to eat.' *Bhava-taṇhā* is another factor that enables stress to arise. (The mind strays.)

c. Vibhava-taṇhā: not wanting things to be this way or that, e.g., having been born, not wanting to die; not wanting to be deprived of the worldly things we've acquired: for example, having status and wealth and yet not wanting our status and wealth to leave us. The truth of the matter is that there's no way this change can be avoided. As soon as it comes, we thus feel stress and pain. (The mind flinches.)

Punappunam pīlitattā

saṁsaraṇtā bhavābhava:

'Repeated oppression,
wandering on

from one state of becoming to another.'

Different states of becoming arise first in the mind, then giving rise to birth. Thus, people of discernment let go of these things, causing:

3. *Nirodha*—cessation or disbanding—to appear in the heart. In other words, the mind discovers the limits of craving and lets it go through the practice of insight meditation, letting go of all fabrications, both good and bad. To be able to let go in this way, we have to develop:

4. *Maggā*—the Path—so as to make it powerful. In other words, we have to give rise to pure discernment within our own minds so that we can know the truth. Stress is a truth; its cause is a truth; its cessation and the Path are truths: To know in this way is liberating insight. And then, when we let all four truths fall away from us so that we gain release from ‘true,’ that’s when we’ll reach deathlessness (*amata-dhamma*). Truths have their drawbacks in that untrue things are mixed in with them. Wherever real money exists, there’s bound to be counterfeit. Wherever there are rich people, there are bound to be thieves waiting to rob them. This is why release has to let go of truths before it can reach nibbāna.

Meditators, then, should acquaint themselves with the enemies of concentration, so as to keep their distance from all five of the Hindrances, the two sorts of *uggaha nimittas*, and the ten corruptions of insight. The mind will then be able to gain release from all things defiling, dirty, and damp. What this means is that the mind doesn’t hold onto anything at all. It lets go of supposings, meanings, practice, and attainment. *Above cause and beyond effect*: That’s the aim of the Buddha’s teachings.

Those who want to get rid of *kāma-taṇhā*—desire and attraction for the six types of sensory objects—have to

develop virtue that's pure all the way to the heart: This is termed heightened virtue (*adhisīla*.) Those who are to get rid of *bhava-taṇhā*—thoughts that stray out, choosing objects to dwell on—first have to develop Right Concentration, pure and circumspect: This is termed heightened mind (*adhicitta*.) Those who are to get rid of *vibhava-taṇhā*—attachment to knowledge and viewpoints, attainments and states of becoming, theories and conceits—will first have to develop clear-seeing discernment, cognitive skill that's pure and fully developed: This is heightened discernment (*adhipaññā*). Thus, the threefold training—virtue, concentration, and discernment—is a group of truths that can let go of the causes of stress. Other than this, there's no way to release.



IV. Mindfulness of Death: Insight Meditation

In other words, keep death in mind. This is where the mind advances to the development of liberating insight, taking death as its theme. 'Death' here refers to the death occurring in the present—physical sensations arising and passing away, mental acts arising and passing away, all in a moment of awareness. Only when you're aware on this level can you be classed as being mindful of death.

Now that we've brought up the topic of death, we have to reflect on birth, seeing how many ways sensations are born and how many ways mental acts are born. This is something a person with a quiet mind can know.

A. Sensations have up to five levels of refinement—

1. *Hina-rūpa*: coarse sensations, sensations of discomfort, aches and pains. When these arise, focus on what causes them until they disappear.

2. *Paṇita-rūpa*: exquisite sensations that make the body feel pleasurable, light, and refined. Focus on what causes them until they disappear.

3. *Sukhumāla-rūpa*: delicate sensations, tender, yielding, and agile. When they arise, focus on what causes them until they disappear.

4. *Oḷārika-rūpa*: physical sensations that give a sense of grandeur, exuberance, brightness, and exultation: '*Mukhavaṇṇo vipassidati.*' When they arise, focus on finding out what causes them until they disappear.

All four of these sensations arise and disband by their very nature; and it's possible to find out where they first appear.

5. '*Mano-bhāva*': imagined circumstances that appear through the power of the mind. When they arise, focus on keeping track of them until they disappear. Once you're able to know in this way, you enter the sphere of true mindfulness of death.

An explanation of this sort of sensation: When the mind is quiet and steadily concentrated, it has the power to create images in the imagination (inner sensations, or sensations within sensations). Whatever images it thinks of will then appear to it; and once they appear, the mind tends to enter into them and take up residence. (It can go great distances.) If the mind fastens onto these sensations, it is said to take birth—simply because it has no sense of death.

These sensations can appear in any of five ways:—

- a. arising from the posture of the body, disappearing when the posture changes;
- b. arising from thoughts imbued with greed, hatred, or delusion—arising, taking a stance, and then disbanding;
- c. arising with an in-breath and disbanding with the following out-breath;
- d. arising from the cleansing of the blood in the lungs—appearing and disbanding in a single instant;

e. arising from the heart's pumping blood into the various parts of the body, the pressure of the blood causing sensations to arise that correspond to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. Sensations of this sort are arising and disbanding every moment.

Another class of sensation is termed '*gocara-rūpa*'—sensations that circle around the physical body. There are five sorts—light, sound, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations—each having five levels. For instance, common light travels slowly; in the flash of an eye it runs for a league and then dies away. The second level, subtle light, goes further; the third level goes further still. The fourth and fifth levels can travel the entire universe. The same holds true for sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations. The relationships between all the potentials in the universe are interacting at every moment, differing only as to whether they're fast or slow. This is the inequality that has been termed '*anicca-lakkhaṇa*'—the characteristic of inherent inconstancy. Whoever is ignorant is bound to think that all this is impossible, but actually this is the way things already are by their nature. We'll come to know this through *vijjā*—cognitive skill—not through ordinary labels and concepts. This is called true knowing, which meditators who develop the inner eye will realize for themselves: knowing the arising of these sensations, their persisting, and their disbanding, in terms of their primary qualities and basic regularity.

Knowing things for what they really are.

Release, purity, dispassion, disbanding;

Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ:

Nibbāna is the ultimate ease.

B. As for mental acts that arise and die, their time span is many thousands of times faster than that of sensations. To be able to keep track of their arising and dying away, our awareness has to be still. The four kinds of mental acts are:

—*Vedanā*: the mind's experience of feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain.

—*Saññā*: recognizing and labeling the objects of the mind.

—*Saṅkhāra*: mental fabrications of good and bad.

—*Viññāṇa*: distinct consciousness of objects.

One class of these mental acts stays in place, arising and disbanding with reference to the immediate present. Another class is termed '*gocara vedanā*,' '*gocara saññā*,' etc., which go out to refer to the world. Each of these has five levels, differing as to whether they're common, refined, or subtle, slow or fast. These five levels connect with one another, running out in stages, and then circling back to their starting point, disbanding and then arising again—all without end.

When we don't have the skill to discern the primary sensations and mental acts that stay in place, we can't see into the '*gocara*' sensations and mental acts that go flowing around. This is termed '*avijjā*,' the unawareness that opens the way for connecting consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*),

giving rise to the act of fabrication (*saṅkhāra*), which is the essence of *kamma*. This gives fruit as sensations and feelings that are followed by craving, and then the act of labeling, which gives rise to another level of consciousness—of sensory objects—and then the cycle goes circling on. This is termed the '*khandha-vaṭṭa*,' the cycle of the aggregates, circling and changing unevenly and inconsistently. To see this is called *aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*, the knowledge that keeps track of inconstancy as it occurs. This is known through the inner eye, i.e., the skill of genuine discernment.

Thus, those who practice the exercises of insight meditation should use their sensitivities and circumspection to the full if they hope to gain release from unawareness. Fabrications, in this context, are like waves on the ocean. If we're out in a boat on the ocean when the waves are high, our vision is curtailed. Our senses of hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation are all curtailed. We won't be able to perceive far into the distance. What this means is that when our minds are immersed in the Hindrances, we won't be able to perceive death at all. But once we've been able to suppress the Hindrances, it's like taking a boat across the ocean when there are no waves. We'll be able to see objects far in the distance. Our eyes will be clear-seeing, our ears clear-hearing, our senses of smell, taste, touch and ideation will be broad and wide open. The water will be clear, and the light brilliant. We'll be able to know all around us.

In the same way, those who are to know death clearly have to begin by practicing concentration as a foundation

for developing liberating insight. How do the five sorts of above-mentioned sensation arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How do physical and mental feelings arise? How do they disappear? What are their causes? How do labels and concepts arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How do mental fabrications arise? What are their causes? How do they disappear? How does consciousness arise by way of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation? What are its causes? How does it disappear?

Altogether there are four levels to each of the five aggregates (*khandhas*): external and internal, staying in place and streaming outward. These can be known at all times, but only people who have the discernment that comes from training the mind in tranquility and insight meditation will be able to know death on this level.

The discernment that arises in this way has been termed '*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*, i.e., understanding past sensations, future sensations, and sensations in the present. These sensations differ in the way they arise and pass away. To know this is to have mastered one cognitive skill.

Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa: With discernment of this sort, we're able to keep track of the states of our own mind as they arise and disappear, sometimes good as they arise and good as they disappear, sometimes bad as they arise and bad as they disappear, sometimes good as they arise and bad as they disappear, sometimes bad as they arise and

good as they disappear. To be able to keep track in this way is to know states of being and birth.

Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa: When the discernment of this skill arises, it leads to disenchantment with the way sensations and mental acts arise and disappear and then arise again, simply circling about: coarser sensations going through the cycle slowly, more refined sensations going quickly; coarser mental acts going slowly, more refined mental acts going quickly. When you can keep track of this, you know one form of stress. Now focus attention back on your own mind to see whether or not it's neutral at that moment. If the mind approves of its knowledge or of the things it knows, that's *kāmasukhallikānuyoga*—indulgence in pleasure. If the mind disapproves of its knowledge or of the things it knows, that's *attakilamathānuyoga*, indulgence in self-infliction. Once you've seen this, make the mind neutral toward whatever it may know: That moment of awareness is the mental state forming the Path. When the Path arises, the causes of stress disband. Try your best to keep that mental state going. Follow that train of awareness as much as you can. The mind when it's in that state is said to be developing the Path—and at whatever moment the Path stands firm, disbanding and relinquishing occur.

When you can do this, you reach the level where you know death clearly. People who know death in this way are then able to reduce the number of their own deaths. Some of the Noble Ones have seven more deaths ahead of them, some have only one more, others go beyond death entirely.

These Noble Ones are people who understand birth and death, and for this reason have only a few deaths left to them. Ordinary people who understand their own birth and death on this level are hard to find. Common, ordinary birth and death aren't especially necessary; but people who don't understand the Dhamma have to put up with birth and death as a common thing.

So whoever is to know death on this level will have to develop the cognitive skill that comes from training the mind. The skill, here, is knowing which preoccupations of the mind are in the past, which are in the future, and which are in the present. This is cognitive skill (*vijjā*). Letting go of the past, letting go of the future, letting go of the present, not latching onto anything at all: This is purity and release.

As for unawareness, it's the exact opposite, i.e., not knowing what's past, not knowing what's future, not knowing what's present—that is, the arising and falling away of sensations and mental acts, or body and mind—or at most knowing only on the level of labels and concepts remembered from what other people have said, not knowing on the level of awareness that we've developed on our own. All of this is classed as *avijjā*, or unawareness.

No matter how much we may use words of wisdom and discernment, it still won't gain us release. For instance, we may know that things are inconstant, but we still fall for inconstant things. We may know about things that are stressful, but we still fall for them. We may know that things are not-self, but we still fall for things that are not-self. Our

knowledge of inconstancy, stress, and not-self isn't true. Then how are these things truly known? Like this:

Knowing both sides,
Letting go both ways,
Shedding everything.

'Knowing both sides' means knowing what's constant and what's inconstant, what's stress and what's ease, what's not-self and what's self. 'Letting go both ways' means not latching onto things that are constant or inconstant, not latching onto stress or ease, not latching onto self or not-self. 'Shedding everything' means not holding onto past, present, or future: Awareness doesn't head forward or back, and yet you can't say that it's taking a stance.

*Yāvadeva nāṇamattāya patissatimattāya anissito ca viharati
na ca kiñci loke upādiyati.*

'Mindful and alert just to the extent of knowledge and remembrance, the mind is independent, not attached to anything in the world.'

Epilogue

I. There are three sets of results arising from the practice.

Set A

1. *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives.

2. *Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa*: the ability to know how the living beings of the world die and are reborn.

3. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: understanding how to put an end to the defilements of the heart.

Set B

1. *Vipassanā-ñāṇa*: clear insight, through training the mind, into phenomena in and of themselves, in terms of the four Noble Truths.

2. *Manomayiddhi*: psychic power, making things appear in line with your thoughts—for example, thinking of a visual image that then appears to the physical eye. Those who are to develop this skill must first become expert at *uggaha nimittas*.

3. *Iddhividhi*: the ability to change such images as you like. Those who are to develop this skill must first become expert in *paṭibhāga nimittas*.

4. *Dibbacakkhu*: clairvoyance, the ability to see great distances. Only people with good optic nerves—and who understand how to adjust the physical properties in the body so as to keep the nerves charged and awake—will be able to develop this skill.

5. *Dibbasota*: clairsaudience, the ability to hear sounds at great distances. Only people whose auditory nerves are good—and who understand how to adjust the properties in the body so that they act as a conducting medium—will be able to develop this skill.

6. *Cetopariya-ñāṇa*: knowing the thoughts and mental states of other people. To do this, you first have to adjust the fluids nourishing your heart muscles so that they're clean and pure.

7. *Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*: the ability to remember previous lives, knowing by means of mental images or intuitive verbal knowledge. To remember past lives, you first have to understand how to interchange the physical properties in the body.

8. *Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*: knowing the causes for mental defilement; knowing the means for putting an end to mental fermentations.

Set C

1. *Attha-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: acumen in understanding the meaning of various teachings.

2. *Dhamma-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: acumen—acquired by means of your own heart—with regard to all fabricated properties and qualities.

3. *Nirutti-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: the ability to understand by means of the heart the issues and languages of people and other living beings in the world.

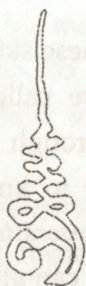
4. *Paṭibhāṇa-paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*: the intuitive ability to respond promptly and aptly in situations where you're called on to speak; the ability to respond to an opponent without having to think: Simply by focusing the mind heavily down, the right response will appear on its own, just as a flashlight gives off light immediately as we press the switch.

* * *

Taken together, all of these skills arise exclusively from training the heart and are called *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*—discernment developed through training the mind. They can't be taught. You have to know them on your own. Thus, they can be called *paccatta-vijjā*, personal skills. If you're astute enough, they can all become transcendent. If not, they all become mundane. Thus, the principles of discernment are two:

1. *Mundane discernment*: studying and memorizing a great deal, thinking and evaluating a great deal, and then understanding on the common level of labels and concepts.

2. *Transcendent discernment*: knowledge that comes from practicing Right Concentration; intuitive understanding that arises naturally on its own within the heart, beyond the scope of the world; clear insight; release from all views, conceits, defilements, and fermentations of the mind.



II. *Upakāra dhamma*: three sets of qualities that are of help in giving rise to cognitive skill.

Set A

1. *Sila-saṁvara*: taking good care of your virtue—your manners and conduct in thought, word, and deed—following such principles as the ten guidelines (*kammapatha*).

2. *Indriya-saṁvara*: being constantly mindful of the six ‘gateways’—the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and ideation—making sure they don’t give rise to anything that would disturb your own peace or that of others.

3. *Bhojane mattaññutā*: having a sense of moderation in the amount of food you eat—not too much, not too little, eating nothing but food compatible with your physical make-up. And make sure that it’s light food. Otherwise, you’ll have to eat only half-full or on the small side. As far as food is concerned, if you can get by on only one meal a day, you’ll find it much easier to train the mind.

There are three ways of eating—

a. Stuffing yourself full. This interferes with concentration and is termed ‘being greedy.’

b. Eating just enough to keep the body going. This is termed ‘being content with what you have.’

c. Eating no more than half full. This is termed ‘being a person of few wants,’ who has no worries associated with

food and whose body weighs lightly. Just as a tree with light heartwood won't sink when it falls in the water, so the meditation of such a person is not inclined to lead to anything low. The senses of such a person—the nerves of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—tend toward peacefulness and are well suited for helping the mind attain peace.

4. *Jāgariyānuyoga*: awakening the physical properties of the body by developing the factor that fabricates the body (*kāya-saṅkhāra*), i.e., adjusting the in-and-out breath so that it's thoroughly beneficial to the properties of earth, water, wind, and fire within the body. This is termed developing mindfulness immersed in the body (*kāyagatāsati-bhāvanā*), as in the verse:

Suppabuddham pabujjhanti sadā gotamasāvakaḥ
Yesam divā ca ratto ca niccam kāyagātasati.

'The disciples of the Buddha Gotama are always wide awake, their mindfulness constantly, by day and by night, immersed in the body'...their mindfulness charging the body whether their eyes are open or closed.

At the same time, we have to understand how to keep the mind wide awake through developing *jhāna*, starting with directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, and singleness of preoccupation (see below). The mind will then awaken from its forgetfulness. With regard to forgetfulness, the Buddha taught that when the mind gets drawn in by its objects, it faints for a spell. If this happens often enough to

become a habit, it gives rise to delusion, leaving us no way to give rise to the discernment of liberating insight.

Set B

1. *Saddhā*: conviction, i.e., being convinced of the causes of goodness and of the results that will come from acting in line with those causes.

2. *Hiri*: inner shame at the thought of doing evil, not daring to do evil either openly or secretly, because we realize that there are no secret places in the world. Even if other people don't see us doing evil, we ourselves are sure to see.

3. *Ottappa*: fear of evil, not being attracted to the idea of doing evil; viewing bad kamma as a poisonous cobra raising its head and spreading its hood, and thus not daring to go near it.

4. *Bahusacca*: studying and training yourself constantly, seeking advice from those who are knowledgeable and expert in the practice. Don't associate with people who have no knowledge of the matters in which you are interested.

5. *Viriya*: persistence in abandoning the defilements of the mind—i.e., the Hindrances; perseverance in giving rise to good within the mind by developing such things as the first jhāna. Briefly put, there are three ways to do this: being persistent in giving rise to the good, in maintaining the good, and in constantly developing the good that has already arisen.

6. *Satipaṭṭhāna*: giving your powers of reference a frame and a focal point by developing mindfulness immersed in the body ('*kesā, lomā...*') or mindfulness of breathing, etc.

7. *Paññā*: discernment; circumspection that's all-encompassing and fully reasonable in doing good, in maintaining the good, and in using the good so as to be of benefit at large—for low-level benefits, intermediate benefits, and ultimate benefits, with regard to this life, lives to come, and the ultimate benefit, nibbāna. This is what is meant by discernment.

Set C

1. **The first jhāna.** *Vitakka*: Think of an object for the mind to focus on. *Vicāra*: Evaluate the object on which you have focused. For example, once you are focused on keeping track of the breath, take a good look at the various breath-sensations in the body. Learn how to adjust and change whichever part or aspect is uncomfortable. Learn how to use whichever part feels good so as to be of benefit to the body and mind. Keep this up continually, and results will appear: The body will feel light and full, permeated with a sense of rapture and refreshment (*pīti*). Awareness will be full and all-round, with no distracting restlessness. At this point, both mind and body are quiet, just as a child lying in a cradle with a doll to play with won't cry. The body is thus at ease, and the mind relaxed (*sukha*). *Ekaggatam cittam*: The mind sticks steadily with a single preoccupation,

without grasping after past or future, comfortably focused in the present. This much qualifies as *jhāna*.

2. The second *jhāna*. Directed thought and evaluation disappear; awareness settles in on its sense of ease and rapture. The body is relaxed, the mind quiet and serene. The body feels full, like the earth saturated with rain water to the point where puddles form. The mind feels brighter and clearer. As awareness focuses more heavily on its one object, it expands itself even further, letting go of the sense of rapture and entering the third *jhāna*.

3. The third *jhāna* has two factors—

a. Sukha, its taste: physical pleasure; cool mental pleasure and peace.

b. Ekaggatārammaṇa: Awareness is firm and fixed in a snug fit with its object. As it focuses strongly and forcibly expands itself, a bright sense of light appears. The mind seems much more open and blooming than before. As you focus in with complete mindfulness and alertness, the sense of pleasure begins to waver. As the mind adjusts its focus slightly, it enters the fourth *jhāna*.

4. The fourth *jhāna* has two factors—

a. Upekkhā: equanimity with regard to objects. Past, future, and the grosser sense of the body in the present disappear.

b. Ekaggatārammaṇa: The mind is solitary, its mindfulness full and bright—as if you were sitting in a brightly-lit, empty room with your work finished, free to relax as you like. The mind rests, its energy strong and expansive.

Now withdraw from this level back out to the first and then enter in again. As you do this repeatedly, liberating insight will arise on its own, like a light connected to a battery: When we press down on the switch, the light flashes out on its own. And then we can use whatever color of bulb we want and put it to use in whatever way we like, depending on our own skill and ingenuity. In other words, the skills mentioned above will appear.

People who develop jhāna fall into three classes:

1. Those who attain only the first level and then gain liberating insight right then and there are said to excel in discernment (*paññādhika*). They awaken quickly, and their release is termed *paññā-vimutti*, release through discernment.

2. Those who develop jhāna to the fourth level, there gaining liberating insight into the Noble Truths, are said to excel in conviction (*saddhādhika*). They develop a moderate number of skills, and their Awakening occurs at a moderate rate. Their release is the first level of *ceto-vimutti*, release through concentration.

3. Those who become skilled at the four levels of jhāna—adept at entering, staying in place, and withdrawing—and then go all the way to the four levels of arūpa-jhāna, after which they withdraw back to the first jhāna, over and over again, until finally intuitive knowledge, the cognitive skills, and liberating discernment arise, giving release from mental fermentation and defilement: These people are said to excel in persistence (*viriyādhika*).

People who practice jhāna a great deal, developing strong energy and bright inner light, can awaken suddenly in a single mental instant, as soon as discernment first arises. Their release is *cetopariyavimutti*, release through mastery of concentration.

These are the results to be gained by meditators. But there have to be causes—our own actions—before the results can come fully developed.



Appendix I

From Keeping the Breath in Mind, Method 2:

There are seven basic steps:

1. Start out with three or seven long in-and-out breaths, thinking *bud-* with the in-breath, and *dho* with the out. Keep the meditation syllable as long as the breath.
2. Be clearly aware of each in-and-out breath.
3. Observe the breath as it goes in and out, noticing whether it's comfortable or uncomfortable, broad or narrow, obstructed or free-flowing, fast or slow, short or long, warm or cool. If the breath doesn't feel comfortable, adjust it until it does. For instance, if breathing in long and out long is uncomfortable, try breathing in short and out short.

As soon as you find that your breathing feels comfortable, let this comfortable breath sensation spread to the different parts of the body. To begin with, inhale the breath sensation at the base of the skull and let it flow all the way down the spine. Then, if you are male, let it spread down your right leg to the sole of your foot, to the ends of your toes, and out into the air. Inhale the breath sensation at the base of the skull again and let it spread down your spine, down your left leg to the ends of your toes, and out into the air. (If you are female, begin with the left side first, because the male and

female nervous systems are different.) Then let the breath from the base of the skull spread down over both shoulders, past your elbows and wrists, to the tips of your fingers, and out into the air. Let the breath at the base of the throat spread down the central nerve at the front of the body, past the lungs and liver, all the way down to the bladder and colon. Inhale the breath right at the middle of the chest and let it go all the way down to your intestines. Let all these breath sensations spread so that they connect and flow together, and you'll feel a greatly improved sense of well-being.

4. Learn four ways of adjusting the breath:

- a. in long and out long,
- b. in long and out short,
- c. in short and out long,
- d. in short and out short.

Breathe whichever way is most comfortable for you. Or, better yet, learn to breathe comfortably all four ways, because your physical condition and your breath are always changing.

5. Become acquainted with the bases or focal points for the mind—the resting spots of the breath—and center your awareness on whichever one seems most comfortable. A few of these bases are:

- a. the tip of the nose,
- b. the middle of the head,
- c. the palate,
- d. the base of the throat,
- e. the breastbone (the tip of the sternum),
- f. the navel (or a point just above it).

If you suffer from frequent headaches or nervous problems, don't focus on any spot above the base of the throat. And don't try to force the breath or put yourself into a trance. Breathe freely and naturally. Let the mind be at ease with the breath—but not to the point where it slips away.

6. Spread your awareness—your sense of conscious feeling—throughout the entire body.

7. Unite the breath sensations throughout the body, letting them flow together comfortably, keeping your awareness as broad as possible. Once you're fully aware of the aspects of the breath you already know in your body, you'll come to know all sorts of other aspects as well. The breath, by its nature, has many facets: breath sensations flowing in the nerves, those flowing around and about the nerves, those spreading from the nerves to every pore. Beneficial breath sensations and harmful ones are mixed together by their very nature.

To summarize: (a) for the sake of improving the energy already existing in every part of your body, so that you can contend with such things as disease and pain; and (b) for the sake of clarifying the knowledge already within you, so that it can become a basis for the skills leading to release and purity of heart—you should always bear these seven steps in mind, because they are absolutely basic to every aspect of breath meditation. When you've mastered them, you will have cut a main road. As for the side roads—the incidentals of breath meditation—there are plenty of them, but they aren't really important. You'll be perfectly safe if you stick to these seven steps and practice them as much as possible.

Appendix II

The 'Seven Important Sets of Principles' listed in the Prologue are common to all schools of Buddhism. In the Pali Canon they appear in a number of discourses (e.g., *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, *Pasādika Sutta*, etc.) as the Buddha's own summary of the essential points of his teaching. Many of these principles are discussed in connection with various aspects of the practice at different points in this book. What follows is a selection of excerpts from Ajaan Lee's other writings and talks dealing with these principles as they relate directly to the practice of keeping the breath in mind.

* * *

When you keep the breath in mind, you get all four frames of reference in one. The breath is "body," feelings lie in the body, the mind lies in the body, mental qualities lie in the mind.

* * *

The four frames of reference when we sit in meditation: The breath is 'body'; comfort and discomfort are 'feeling'; purity and clarity are states of 'mind'; and steadiness of mind is 'mental quality.'

* * *

Chanda: being content to focus on the breath. *Viriya*: trying to adjust the breath so that it's comfortable. *Citta*: paying attention to how the breath is flowing. *Vimaṇsā*: knowing how to use the breath to benefit every part of the body. If we follow these four bases or steps to power, they'll lead us to liberating insight.

* * *

When practicing concentration, we have to imbue it with the four bases of power.

Chanda (desire): Have a friendly interest in the breath, keeping track of it to see, when we breathe in, what we breathe in with it. If we don't breathe out, we'll have to die. If we breathe out but don't breathe back in, we'll have to die as well. We keep focused on this, without focusing the mind on anything else.

Viriya (persistence): Be diligent in all affairs related to the breath. You have to be intent that "Now I'm going to breathe in, now I'm going to breathe out; I'm going to make it long, short, heavy, light, cool, warm, etc." You have to be in charge of the breath.

Citta (intentness): Focus intently on the breath. Observe how the external breath comes in and connects with the internal breath in the upper, middle, and lower parts of the body; in the chest—the lungs, the heart, the ribs, the backbone; in the abdomen—stomach, liver, kidneys, intestines; the breath that goes out the ends of the fingers and toes and out every pore.

Vimāṇsā (discrimination): Contemplate and evaluate the breath that comes in to nourish the body to see whether it fills the body, to see whether it feels easy and natural, to see if there are any parts where you still have to adjust it. Notice the characteristics of how the external breath strikes the internal breath, to see if they connect everywhere or not, to see how the effects of the breath on the properties of earth, water, and fire arise, remain, and pass away.

All of this comes under meditation on physical events, and qualifies as the great frame of reference (*mahā-satipaṭṭhāna*) as well. When the mind has fully developed the four paths to success, complete with mindfulness and alertness, the results in terms of the body are the stilling of pain. In terms of the mind, they can lead all the way to the transcendent: the stages of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship.

* * *

If you really develop concentration, it will result in the five kinds of strength: (1) conviction; when you gain conviction in the results you see coming from your efforts, then (2) persistence arises without anyone having to force you. From there, (3) mindfulness becomes more comprehensive in what you're doing, (4) concentration becomes firmly established in what you're doing, giving rise to (5) discernment of all things right and wrong. Altogether these are called the five strengths.

* * *

Tranquility meditation (*samatha*) is a mind snug in a single preoccupation. It doesn't establish contact with anything else; it keeps itself cleansed of outside preoccupations. Insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is when the mind lets go of all preoccupations in a state of all-around mindfulness and alertness. When tranquility imbued with insight arises in the mind, five faculties arise and become dominant all at once: (1) *Saddhindriya*: Your conviction becomes solid and strong. Whatever anyone else may say, good or bad, your mind isn't affected. (2) *Viriyindriya*: Your persistence becomes resilient. Whether anyone teaches you the path or not, you keep at it constantly without flagging or getting discouraged. (3) *Satindriya*: Mindfulness becomes dominant, enlarged in the great frame of reference. You don't have to force it. It spreads all over the body, in the same way that the branches of a large tree protect the entire trunk, without anyone having to pull them down or shake them up. Awareness becomes entirely radiant in every posture: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. It knows on its own without your having to think. This all-around awareness is what is meant by the great frame of reference. (4) *Samādhindriya*: Your concentration becomes dominant, too. Whatever you're doing, the mind doesn't waver or stray. Even if you're talking to the point where your mouth opens a meter wide, the mind is still at normalcy. If the body wants to eat, lie down, sit, stand, walk, run, think, whatever, that's its business. Or if any part of it gets weary or pained, again, that's its business, but the mind remains straight and set still

in a single preoccupation, without straying off into anything else. (5) *Paññindriya*: Discernment becomes dominant as well, to the point where you can make the mind attain stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, or even arahantship.

* * *

In order to divest our hearts of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc., we have to develop concentration, which is composed of seven basic qualities—

1. Mindfulness as a factor for Awakening (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*): The mind is centered firmly on the breath, aware of the body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities.

2. Analysis of present qualities as a factor for Awakening (*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*): We let the breath spread throughout the body, making an enlarged frame of reference. We know how to adjust, improve, choose, and use our breaths so that they give us comfort. We throw out whichever breaths are harmful and foster whichever ones are beneficial.

3. Persistence as a factor for Awakening (*virīya-sambojjhaṅga*): We don't abandon or forget the breath. We stick with it, and it sticks with us as we keep warding the Hindrances from the heart. We don't fasten on or become involved with distracting perceptions. We keep trying to make our stillness of mind stronger and stronger.

4. Rapture as a factor for Awakening (*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*): When the mind is quiet, the breath is full and refreshing. We're free from the Hindrances and from every sort of restlessness, like a white cloth that's spotlessly clean. When the mind is

clear in this way, it feels nothing but comfort and fullness, which gives rise to a sense of satisfaction, termed rapture.

5. Serenity as a factor of Awakening (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*): The breath is solid throughout the body. The elements are at peace, and so is the mind. Nothing feels troublesome or aroused.

6. Concentration as a factor for Awakening (*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*): The breath is firm, steady, and unwavering. The mind takes a firm stance in a single preoccupation.

7. Equanimity as a factor for Awakening (*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*): When body, feelings, mind, and mental qualities are fully snug with one another in these two types of breath—when the mind stays with these aspects of the breath—it doesn't have to fashion anything at all. It doesn't latch onto any manifestation of good or bad. Neutral and unperturbed, it doesn't approve or disapprove of anything.

* * *

When mindfulness saturates the body the way flame saturates every thread in the mantle of a Coleman lantern, the elements throughout the body work together like a group of people working together on a job: Each person helps a little here and there, and in no time at all—almost effortlessly—the job is done. Just as the mantle of a Coleman lantern whose every thread is soaked in flame becomes light, white, and dazzling, so if you soak your mind in mindfulness until it's aware of the entire body, both the body and mind become buoyant. When you think

using the power of mindfulness, your sense of the body will immediately become thoroughly bright, helping to develop both body and mind. You'll be able to sit or stand for long periods of time without getting tired, to walk for great distances without getting fatigued, to go for unusually long periods of time on just a little food without getting hungry, or to go without food and sleep altogether for several days running without losing energy.

As for the heart, it will become pure, open, and free from blemish. The mind will become bright, energetic, and strong. *Saddhā-balaṃ*: Your conviction will run like a car running without stop along the road. *Viriya-balaṃ*: Your persistence will accelerate and advance. *Sati-balaṃ*: Your mindfulness will be robust and vigorous. *Samādhi-balaṃ*: Your concentration will become unwavering and resilient. No activity will be able to kill it. In other words, no matter what you're doing—sitting, standing, walking, talking, whatever—as soon as you think of practicing concentration, your mind will immediately be centered. Whenever you want it, just think of it and you have it. When your concentration is this powerful, insight meditation is no problem. *Paññā-balaṃ*: Your discernment will be like a double-edged sword: Your discernment of what's outside will be sharp; your discernment of what's inside will be sharp.

When these five strengths appear in the heart, the heart will be fully mature. Your conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment will all be mature and pre-eminent in their own spheres. It's the nature of

mature adults that they cooperate. When they work together on a job, they finish it. So it is when you have these five adults working together for you: You'll be able to complete any task. Your mind will have the power to demolish every defilement in the heart, just as a nuclear bomb can demolish anything anywhere in the world.

* * *

When your concentration has strength, it gives rise to discernment: the ability to see stress, its cause, its disbanding, and the Path to its disbanding, all clearly within the breath. We can explain this as follows:

The in-and-out breath is stress—the in-breath the stress of arising, the out-breath the stress of passing away. Not being aware of the breath as it goes in and out, not knowing the characteristics of the breath: This is the cause of stress. Knowing when the breath is coming in, knowing when it's going out, knowing its characteristics clearly—i.e., keeping your views in line with the truth of the breath: This is *Right View*, part of the Noble Path.

Knowing which ways of breathing are uncomfortable, knowing how to vary the breath; knowing, 'That way of breathing is uncomfortable; we'll have to breathe like this in order to feel at ease': This is *Right Intention*.

The mental factors that think about and properly evaluate all aspects of the breath are *Right Speech*.

Knowing various ways of improving the breath; breathing, for example, in long and out long, in short and out

short, in short and out long, in long and out short, until you come across the breath that's most comfortable for you: This is *Right Action*.

Knowing how to use the breath to purify the blood, how to let this purified blood nourish the heart muscles, how to adjust the breath so that it eases the body and soothes the mind, how to breathe so that you feel full and refreshed in body and mind: This is *Right Livelihood*.

Trying to adjust the breath so that it comforts the body and mind, and to keep trying as long as you aren't fully at ease: This is *Right Effort*.

Being mindful of the in-and-out breath at all times, knowing the various aspects of the breath—the up-flowing breath, the down-flowing breath, the breath in the stomach, the breath in the intestines, the breath flowing along the muscles and out to every pore—keeping track of these things with every in-and-out breath: This is *Right Mindfulness*.

A mind intent only on matters of the breath, not pulling any other objects in to interfere, until the breath is refined, giving rise to fixed absorption and then liberating insight: This is *Right Concentration*.

When all of these aspects of the Noble Path—virtue, concentration, and discernment—are brought together fully mature within the heart, you gain insight into all aspects of the breath, knowing that, 'Breathing this way gives rise to good mental states; breathing that way gives rise to bad mental states.' You let go of the factors—i.e., the breath in all its aspects—that fabricate the body, the factors that fabricate

speech, the factors that fabricate the mind, whether good or bad, letting them be as they truly are, in line with their own inherent nature: This is the disbanding of stress.



Glossary

Arahant: A 'worthy one' or 'pure one,' i.e., a person whose heart no longer has any defilements and is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his Noble Disciples.

Āyatana: Sense media, i.e., the six senses (the five physical senses plus the intellect) and their corresponding objects.

Dhamma: Event; phenomenon; the way things are in and of themselves; quality—both in its neutral and in its positive senses: (1) the basic qualities into which natural phenomena—mental and physical—can be analyzed; the terms in which things are known by the sense of ideation. Also, any teaching that analyzes phenomena into their basic terms. This is one sense in which the Buddha's doctrine is his 'Dhamma.' (2) The quality of one's heart and mind, as manifest by the rectitude, fairness, compassion, composure, discernment, etc., revealed in one's actions. The manifestations can be enumerated and prescribed as principles (again, 'dhamma'—another sense in which the Buddha's doctrine is his Dhamma) that can then be put into practice and developed as means of removing everything defiling and obscuring from the heart so that the

quality of deathlessness can become fully apparent within: This is the Buddha's Dhamma in its ultimate sense.

Dhātu: Element, property, potential. Basic forces that, when aroused out of their latent state, cause activity on the physical or psychological level. In traditional Thai physics, which is based on the physics of the Pali Canon, the four dhātus of earth, water, fire, and wind are said to permeate all matter in latent or potential form. To become manifest, they have to be aroused. Thus, for example, the act of starting a fire is explained as the arousal of the fire-dhātu (*tejas*), which already exists in the air and in the object to be ignited. Once this is 'seized,' it clings to the fuel, and the object will be on fire. The fire will continue burning as long as *tejas* has sustenance to cling to. When it runs out of sustenance or is forced to let go, it will grow quiet—returning to its normal, latent state—and the individual fire will go out.

On the level of the human body, diseases are explained as resulting from the aggravation or imbalance of any of these four physical properties. Diseases are classified by how they feel: Fevers are attributed to the fire property, dizziness and faintness to the wind property, constipation to the earth property, etc. Well-being is defined as a state in which none of these properties is dominant. All are quiet, unaroused, balanced and still.

There are a number of lists of dhātus given in the Pali Canon. The six dhātus are the four physical properties plus space and consciousness. The 18 dhātus are the six senses,

their respective objects, and the acts of consciousness associated with each.

Indriya: Faculty; pre-eminent or dominant quality. The five faculties—conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment—are qualities that, when they become dominant in the mind, can lead to Awakening. The 22 qualities that can dominate consciousness are: the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, ideation; femininity, masculinity, life; pleasure, pain, joy, sorrow, equanimity; conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment; the realization that ‘I shall come to know the unknown,’ final knowledge, the state of final-knower.

Jhāna: Absorption in a single object or preoccupation. *Rūpa-jhāna* refers to absorption in a physical sensation; *arūpa-jhāna*, to absorption in a mental notion or state. When Ajaan Lee uses the term ‘jhāna’ by itself, he is usually referring to *rūpa-jhāna*.

Kamma: Acts of intention that result in states of being and birth.

Kammaṭṭhāra: Ten guidelines for moral conduct—not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, not speaking divisively, not using coarse or vulgar language, not speaking idly, not coveting, not harboring ill will, holding right views.

Kasiṇa: An object stared at with the purpose of fixing an image of it in one’s consciousness, the image then being manipulated to fill the totality of one’s awareness.

Kesā: Hair of the head; the first in the list of 32 parts of the body used as a meditation theme for counteracting lust.

Khandha: Aggregate—the component parts of sensory perception; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced: *rūpa*—sensations, sense data; *vedanā*—feelings of pleasure, pain, and indifference that result from the mind's savoring of its objects; *saññā*—labels, names, concepts, allusions; *saṅkhāra* thought-formations (see below); *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness.

Nibbāna: The 'unbinding' of the mind from sensations and mental acts, preoccupations and suppositions. As this term is also used to refer to the extinguishing of a fire, it carries the connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. (The use of the word 'unbinding' to refer to the extinguishing of a fire is best understood in light of the way fire was viewed at the time of the Buddha. See '*dhātu*.')

Nirāmisa-sukha: Literally, 'un-raw' pleasure, or pleasure 'not of the flesh.' The bliss and ease of nibbāna, a pleasure independent of sensations or mental acts.

Nirodha: Disbanding, stopping, cessation. In the absolute sense, this refers to the utter disbanding of stress and its causes. In an applied sense, it can refer to the temporary and partial suppression of defilement and stress attained in tranquility meditation.

Nivaraṇa: Hindrances; mental qualities that hinder the mind from attaining concentration and discernment: sensual desire, ill will, torpor & lethargy, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.

Pāli: The name of the most ancient recension of the early Buddhist texts now extant and—by extension—of the language in which it was composed.

Pāṭimokkha: The basic monastic code, composed of 227 rules.

Sankhāra: Fabrication—the forces and factors that fabricate things, the process of fabrication, and the fabricated things that result. As the fourth *khandha*, this refers to the act of fashioning thoughts, urges, etc. within the mind. As a blanket term for all five *khandhas*, it refers to all things fabricated by physical or psychological forces.

Stūpa: Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of the Buddha or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries, however, this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma; and into the pagodas of China, Korea and Japan.

Tejas: See '*dhātu*.'

* * *

The translations in this book are based on the editions printed during Ajaan Lee's lifetime that seem most definitive and complete. At certain points, these editions differ from those currently available. Also, I was able to locate a copy of *Basic Themes* containing corrections in Ajaan Lee's own hand. These have been incorporated in the translation.

If these translations are in any way inaccurate or misleading, I ask forgiveness of the author and reader for having unwittingly stood in their way. As for whatever may be accurate—conducive to the aims intended by the author—I hope the reader will make the best use of it, translating it a few steps further, into the heart, so as to attain those aims.

The translator



*Sabbe sattā sadā hontu
averā sukhajivino.
Kataṃ puññaphalaṃ mayhaṃ
sabbe bhāgi bhavantu te.*

May all living beings always live happily,
free from animosity.

May all share in the blessings
springing from the good I have done.

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